

THE ROLE OF SIMULTANEOUS COUNTERNARCOTICS AND COUNTERTERRORISM OPERATIONS IN THE AFGHAN COIN MODEL

A Monograph

by

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14. ABSTRACT Afghanistan is a country that has suffered decades of civil war. It is also heavily affected by the external policies of its neighbors and is currently facing one of the deadliest insurgencies active in the world today. It also has the highest opium production record in the world. In his research, the author has attempted to highlight the importance of simultaneous counterterrorism and counternarcotic operations in degrading external support of the insurgency, and ultimately bringing the insurgents to the negotiating table. The author has tried to examine the validity of this theory by examining the Colombian COIN model, which was developed through Plan Colombia and the security policies of Alvaro Uribe to target terrorists and narco-traffickers simultaneously. Based on the current security conditions, involvement of the police in the current security struggle, and the author's own experience, he has attempted to examine the role of the General Directorate of Special Police Units (GDPSU), an elite police unit that has been successful in conducting simultaneous counterterrorism (CT) and counternarcotic (CN) operations across Afghanistan. Since the country's other elite assets, such as the Army Commando Corps and tactical units of the National Directorate of Security, are also involved in the process, the author recommends a clear distinction of roles and responsibilities. He further recommends that the GDPSU have the lead in Afghan COIN effort/operations and that the NDS and the Afghan National Army provide intelligence and military support, respectively.				
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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF SIMULTANEOUS COUNTERNARCOTICS AND COUNTERTERRORISM OPERATIONS IN THE AFGHAN COIN MODEL, by Lieutenant Colonel Ghulam Mustafa Wardak, 56 pages.

Afghanistan is a country that has suffered decades of civil war. It is also heavily affected by the external policies of its neighbors and is currently facing one of the deadliest insurgencies active in the world today. It also has the highest opium production record in the world. In his research, the author has attempted to highlight the importance of simultaneous counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations in degrading external support of the insurgency, and ultimately bringing the insurgents to the negotiating table. The author has tried to examine the validity of this theory by examining the Colombian COIN model, which was developed through Plan Colombia and the security policies of Alvaro Uribe to target terrorists and narco-traffickers simultaneously. Based on the current security conditions, involvement of the police in the current security struggle, and the author's own experience, he has attempted to examine the role of the General Directorate of Special Police Units (GDPSU), an elite police unit that has been successful in conducting simultaneous counterterrorism (CT) and counternarcotics (CN) operations across Afghanistan. Since the country's other elite assets, such as the Army Commando Corps and tactical units of the National Directorate of Security, are also involved in the process, the author recommends a clear distinction of roles and responsibilities. He further recommends that the GDSPU have the lead in Afghan COIN effort/operations and that the NDS and the Afghan National Army provide intelligence and military support, respectively.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
BSF	British Special Forces
CARL	Combined Arms Research Library
CGSC	U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CID	Criminal Investigation Directorate
CN	Counternarcotics
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CRU	Crisis Response Unit
CT	Counterterrorism
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
GDPSU	General Directorate of Police Special Units
GIROA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISI	Inter Service Intelligence
KCP	Kabul City Police
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MDN	Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
MMAS	Master of Military Art and Science
MoI	Ministry of Interior
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	National Directorate of Security

OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
QRF	Quick Reaction Forces
RPG	rocket-propelled grenade
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies
TPP	Tehreek Taliban Pakistan
U.S.	United States of America
VBIED	Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices

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INTRODUCTION

The unforgettable attack on the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001 not only shook the United States of America, but the whole world. These attacks were designed and planned by Al-Qaida in Afghanistan, far from the continent of North America. Suddenly every media outlet in the world and intelligence service in the Western world focused on this long forgotten country. Afghanistan fell from the West's radar, particularly that of the U.S., after the fall of the Soviet-backed government in the early 90s in Afghanistan. It was considered that the Communist expansion had been checked in Afghanistan and Pakistan would take care of the rest. Pakistan, a close ally of the U.S. during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, tried to install a new government to favor its policies and agenda. Because of the varied ethnic composition of Afghanistan, Pakistan, which is greatly influenced by Great Britain, tried the old British formula of divide and rule over Afghanistan. This formula not only divided the many ethnic groups in Afghanistan but also created a power vacuum, which further resulted in civil war. The civil war was between many small and large factions until 1996 when a new group of religious fanatics appeared called the "Taliban," who initially consisted of young frustrated Pashtun immigrants in Pakistan. The powerful Pakistani intelligence service – Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) – decided to invest in these young Pashtuns. The ISI trained and equipped these young men to invade Afghanistan to bring justice and peace in the form of strict Sharia Law. The Taliban controlled almost 90 percent of Afghanistan by the end of 1996. All of the other factions were pushed back to the northern part of Afghanistan into the Panjsher valley. Taliban rule meant no school for women, public executions, banning of all TV channels, stoning of women, and many other strict punishments. They received generous donations from the Wahabi Arabs and other extremist groups from around the globe.

The Taliban welcomed Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaida who was living in exile since 1991. He found Afghanistan the grounds where he could invest in his war against the

United States. Bin Laden continuously threatened the government and people of the U.S. for their involvement and interference in the Muslim world. Finally, he achieved his long-desired goal of attacking the U.S. on its own soil. New York never faced such a horrific day in its history as when two planes hit the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. That tragic day has since been remembered as 9/11. The government of the U.S. demanded the Taliban surrender bin Laden, which they refused. The U.S. with its allies decided to go to war with the Taliban in Afghanistan and the first attacks were launched in October 2001. In November 2001, the capital city of Kabul fell. Forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), led by the U.S. and partnered with the Northern Alliance of Afghanistan, took over the capital city and installed the interim government under the supervision of President Hamid Karzai.

The fight against terrorism began in Afghanistan and since then U.S. and NATO forces have been continuously involved in eliminating terrorist groups in Afghanistan. Although bin Laden was killed in Pakistan in 2011, terrorist activities continue to threaten the Western way of life. Since the fall of the Taliban up until now, NATO and the U.S. in particular have not only fought this terrorism, but have also assisted the Afghan government in establishing an indigenous force to protect its sovereignty and deny terrorist safe havens on Afghan soil. Building the Afghan military from scratch was not an easy task but due to significant commitment and hard work, Afghanistan now has a capable national army and national police. Due to the limited space for this paper, the author will only address the role of special police units in the current struggle of counterinsurgency (COIN) in Afghanistan.

During the early years of President Karzai's government, many small task forces were created. These task forces were trained, equipped, and funded by the NATO forces. They were designed to partner with the international forces in conducting searches for and pursuing fleeing Taliban and Al-Qaida associates. Established in 2003, Commando Unit 333 was one of these task

forces.¹ Commando Unit 333 was trained, equipped, and funded by the British Special Forces. The unit was trained and designed to conduct counterterrorism (CT) and counternarcotics (CN) operations in partnership with the British forces. The unit's success resulted in the establishment of other similar units. By 2008, the special police units had grown in numbers. Three tactical units, an intelligence cell, and two training centers had been established. In order to better manage and supervise these units the General Directorate of Police Special Units (GDPSU) was created in 2008.² All the special police units are directed and administered by the GDPSU, which reports directly to the Deputy Minister of Interior of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

After more than a decade of war in Afghanistan, the international forces led by the U.S. decided to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan and transition the security responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The end of 2014 will complete the withdrawal process. Now, the question remains whether the ANSF is capable of defending the nation's sovereignty and providing security to its citizens.

Insurgency is the main impediment in the development of Afghanistan. Many terrorists have been killed or captured during the decade-long war in Afghanistan, yet the people of Afghanistan remain threatened by terrorist attacks. Terrorism is used as a tactic by the insurgents to terrorize and influence the will of the people and the central government. Terrorism is one of their most influential tools, but the other important factor is funding. Although some of the insurgent groups active in Afghanistan receive large amounts of foreign support from the neighboring countries of Afghanistan, mainly Pakistan and Iran, the insurgents also have another form of funding that enables the continuation of their operations. This second form of funding is

¹General Directorate of Police Special Units, *Guzresh E Maloomat Fushur Da Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Police* [Summarized Readiness Report of GDPSU] (Kabul Afghanistan: Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan, 2013).

²Ministry of Interior, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Naqshe Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Dar Mubareza Alaihe Terrorism* [Role of General Directorate of Police Special Units in Countering Terrorism] (Kabul Afghanistan: Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan, 2013).

derived from opium production and distribution. Afghanistan is considered the world's largest opium producer. Opium is grown in remote and unsecure areas of Afghanistan. The processing of opium from cultivation to its refinement in mobile laboratories is supervised and controlled by the insurgents or their associates. The largest group benefiting from the production of opium is the Taliban.

The GDPSU has been actively conducting CT, CN, and intelligence operations throughout Afghanistan. Its tactical units, 333, 444, and the Crisis Response Unit (CRU), have the capability to conduct operations independently and in partnership with international forces. Counterinsurgency operations are very important for the survival of the central government and its legitimacy. The author will attempt to identify how the General Directorate of Police Special Units contributes to the current struggle of counterinsurgency by conducting simultaneous counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations. In the following sections of this research, the author will define the importance of terrorism as a tactic in the survival and expansion of the insurgency and the role of narcotics in providing funding for insurgents. The author will further explore the role and effectiveness of the GDPSU's lead units in the current operational environment of Afghanistan now and post-2014. Before concluding the research with recommendations, the author will attempt to study and establish similarities between the GDPSU's current operational processes and the successful COIN operations conducted in Columbia.

Key Factors of the Afghan Insurgency

In this section of the research, the author will examine the importance of terrorism, narcotics, and external support in making insurgencies successful. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, insurgents have been benefitting from the above factors since the beginning of the civil war. Where narcotics and external support have declined since the commencement of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in late 2001, terrorist attacks have dramatically increased in the cities

and outskirts of Afghanistan. Terrorism is used as a tactic to control, influence, and use the population in support of the insurgents' cause. It is also used to protect the cultivation, production, and export of narcotics. Opium, which is the main source of narcotics in Afghanistan, is grown and refined in mobile and static laboratories in the eastern, southern, and western parts of Afghanistan. These areas share borders mostly with Iran and Pakistan. The areas are chosen for various reasons: 1) low ANSF presence in the area; 2) low level of education and high unemployment rate in these areas; 3) the distance to the borders with Pakistan and Iran, which assists in the drug trafficking and provides safe havens when the ANSF conduct operations; and 4) most areas in the southern, eastern, and western regions of Afghanistan are dominated by Pashtuns, who are more sympathetic religiously to the insurgents in comparison to other ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

Narcotics

We have learned, and we have demonstrated, that drug traffickers and terrorists work out of the same jungle; they plan in the same cave and they train in the same desert.³

—Asa Hutchinson, Former Head of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

Most of the countries around the globe are wrestling with the problem of narcotics. In most countries of the world, narcotics are an issue involving drug traffickers, cartels, and criminals; in Afghanistan, narcotics largely assist insurgents. The ANSF and the international forces in Afghanistan have been conducting counternarcotics operations for more than a decade, but they have yet to overcome the issue. Over the past three decades, the destruction of rural infrastructure, particularly irrigation and other rural assets, has reduced the licit rural economy. Under these circumstances, the Taliban have succeeded in forcing the population in rural areas of Afghanistan to cultivate poppies.

³Robyn E. Blumner, "The Drug and Terror Connection," *St. Petersburg Times*, 2002.

In 2012, Mullah Naim Barich, the shadow governor of the Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, said, “The funds from the poppy harvest will permit the Taliban to survive, and therefore it must be protected at all cost.”⁴ Earlier in 2008, General John Cradock, then NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, said that profits from narcotics, “buy[s] the bomb makers and the bombs, the bullets and the trigger-pullers that are killing our soldiers and marines and airmen, and we have to stop them.”⁵ It is a proven fact that the drug trade and its growth hold vital importance for the Afghan Taliban and their Al-Qaeda associates. It is a source of income that keeps the insurgency machine functional. According to the *Washington Post*, insurgents in Afghanistan receive between 70 to 100 million U.S. dollars annually from the drug business, while the Ministry of Counternarcotics of Afghanistan estimates it as high as 400 million U.S. dollars.⁶ With such a high income, it is not surprising that the Taliban and other insurgent groups have proven so resilient, despite the heavy pounding by Afghan and allied forces. Insurgents in Afghanistan benefit from narcotics by taxing the farmers, and provide services for them by providing security for the mobile laboratories, and route security. The Taliban have also attempted to disrupt the eradication campaigns in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan.

In a report released in September 2013 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the decrease in opium production was mainly attributed to the fear of eradication.⁷ The same report indicates that southern Afghanistan, which contains the larger pockets of Taliban-

⁴U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Treasury Targets Taliban Shadow Governor of Helmand Afghanistan as Narcotics Trafficker,” Press Center, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1768.aspx> (accessed 10 January 2014).

⁵Thom Shanker, “Obstacle in Bid to Curb Afghan Trade in Narcotics,” *The New York Times*, 23 December 2008, sec. International/Asia Pacific, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/23/world/asia/23poppy.html> (accessed 19 February 2014).

⁶Philip Swarts, “Terrorist Still Profit from Afghan Drug Trade,” *Washington Times*, 20 September 2013, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/sep/20/terrorist-organizations-still-profit-afghan-drug-t/> (accessed 20 December 2013).

⁷United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “Afghanistan Opium Risk Assessment 2013,” UNODC, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/ORAS_report_2013_phase12.pdf (accessed 13 October 2013), 5.

controlled areas, remains the largest opium-cultivating region of the country. It is very important for insurgents to isolate an area and its population under their cover of terror, where they facilitate the cultivation of opium. This isolation causes serious problems for the central government. First, it undermines the legitimacy of the Afghan government. Second, it does not allow any growth in the legitimate economy within that specific area under Taliban control because any economic growth or substitute means of income threatens the opium business. Finally, an unbalanced economic growth can result in ethnic grievances, which has been a major reason for Afghan conflicts throughout its history. It is important to choke off the money that sustains the insurgency. Narcotics are an important means for insurgents. When complemented by terrorism, they combine and create a sophisticated approach towards their desired ends.

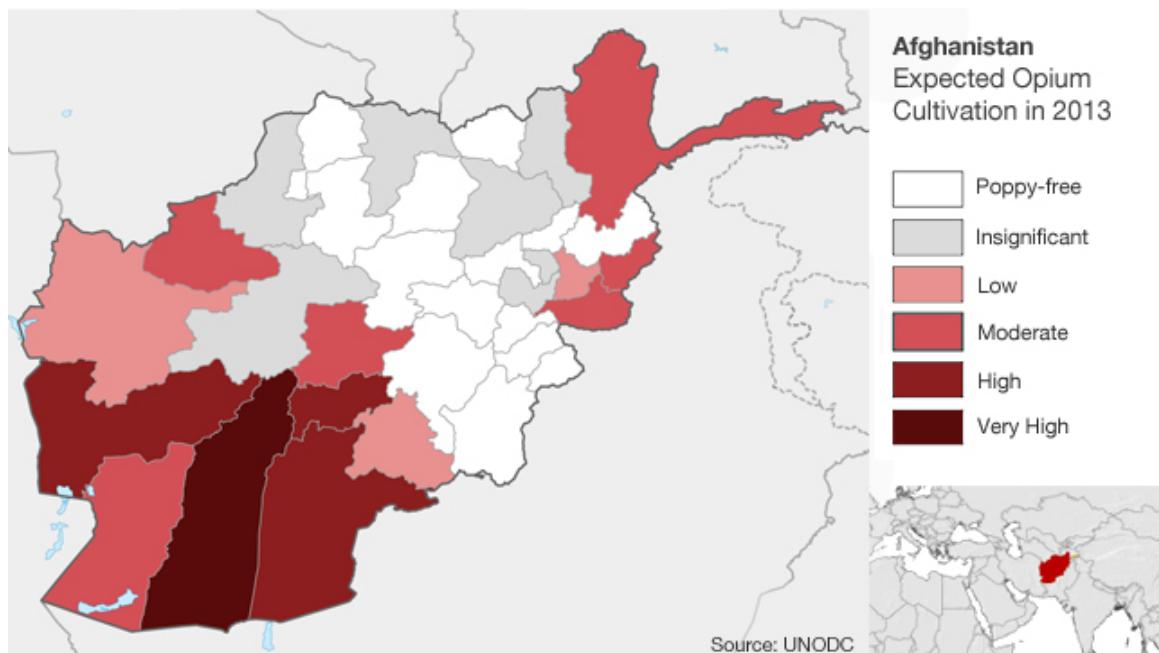


Figure 1: Expected Opium Cultivation in Afghanistan, 2013

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan Opium Risk Assessment 2013 (Kabul: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013), 7.

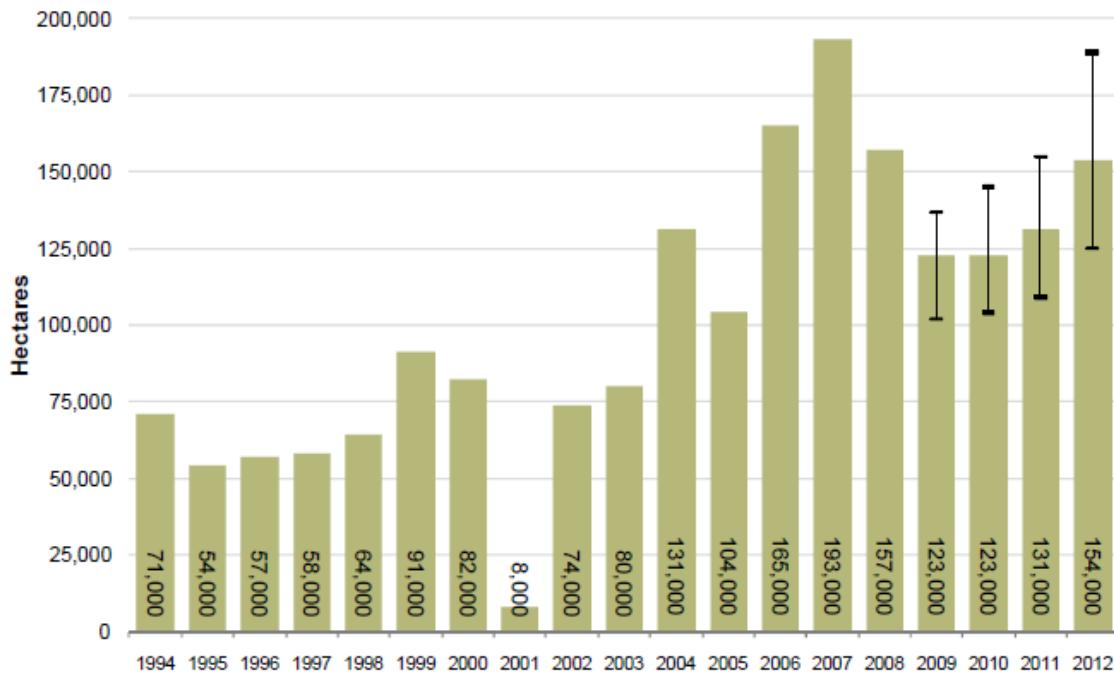


Figure 2: Opium cultivation in Afghanistan 1994-2012

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan Opium Risk Assessment 2013 (Kabul: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013), 8.

Terrorism

Terrorism is a form of violence used against noncombatants to achieve political goals. In some cases, the target audience and victims may vary, but in Afghanistan, they are mostly the same.⁸ Unarmed civilians are targeted to instill fear in communities, which forces the civilian population to comply with the principles and policies of the insurgents. Insurgents target Afghan government members including military and cabinet members, not only to influence and terrorize the government members, but also to convince the civilian populace that the central government is weak and unable to protect its own members. In Afghanistan, terrorism is conducted in different forms. The most common and violent is suicide bombing and vehicle-borne, improvised

⁸Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed., rev. (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 231.

explosive devices (VBIED). This form of terrorism is used to target politicians, members of the cabinet, members of the ANSF, population centers, key infrastructure, and members of key political parties.

In a section of his book, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare Theory and Practice*, David Galula writes, the insurgent “will win the war because, in the final analysis, the exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population or, at worst, on its submissiveness.”⁹ Insurgents in Afghanistan have constantly opposed any political talks with the Afghan government as long as the current government approves of foreign military presence in Afghanistan. It is not only the government but also a majority of the Afghan people who want the Western military support to continue. The wounds of the Afghan civil war in early 90s and the harsh reign of the Taliban that followed are still fresh. The majority of the Afghan people are still under the impression that with a complete foreign military withdrawal, Afghanistan will again follow the path of the 90s. With these facts in mind, insurgents have a slim chance of reaching a peaceful agreement with the population as described by Galula; therefore, they have to resort to using terrorism for submission of the Afghan people and Government. As stated earlier, suicide attacks, IEDs, and VBIEDs are common insurgent tactics used by many insurgent groups in Afghanistan.

Amongst these groups, the Haqqani Network has used suicide bombers as its signature tactic. The Haqqani Network, a strong insurgent group, has enjoyed safe havens, funding, and training and recruitment facilities on both sides of the border, both before and after the Taliban regime’s rule, and will be discussed in more detail in the following section under foreign support. Maulavi Jalaluddin Haqqani, the former Minister of Tribal Affairs under the Taliban regime,

⁹David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare Theory: and Practice* (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 1964), 8, 143.

supervises the Haqqani Network.¹⁰ The Haqqani Network has conducted many terror attacks all over Afghanistan. The terrorist attacks conducted on 11 September 2011 were designed and directed by the Haqqani Network. Former U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, during his report to a U.S. Senate panel, said, “With ISI support, Haqqani operatives planned and conducted a truck bomb attack [on 11 September], as well as the assault on our embassy,”¹¹ For the Afghan people, the Haqqani Network is one of the most hated and feared insurgent groups. The Haqqani Network was also involved in attacks on the Indian Embassy in 2008. Many have died during the recurring terrorist attacks.

Another technique that the insurgents have been using as the weapon of choice in mainly remote areas and along provincial highways is their shadow governments. Taliban shadow governments exist in many areas of Afghanistan. Shadow governments are used to undermine the legitimacy of the central government by establishing parallel government structures, enforcing strict Sharia law. Insurgent groups affiliated with the Taliban have assassinated many Afghan government employees who refused to stop working for the government. These victims have not been limited to the ANSF, but also include civilian low-ranking officials working for other government entities such as in education, agriculture, rural rehabilitation, and many more. Highway attacks, mobile checkpoints, and road mines are among other techniques used by the insurgents as means to their objectives. Insurgents have conducted not only ambushes to target ISAF and ANSF convoys, but have also established mobile check points where they search individuals traveling to different provinces. While searching, if found guilty of any affiliation with the central government or any international organization, the person will be brutally

¹⁰Jeffrey A. Dressler, *The Haqqani Network from Pakistan to Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2010).

¹¹Mike Mullen, “Pakistan ‘Backed Haqqani Attack on Kabul’,” BBC US and Canada, 22 September 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-15024344> (accessed 13 September 2013).

executed on the spot or abducted for ransom. The sole purpose of these brutal assassinations is to instill such fear in the hearts of the Afghan people that they have no other choice but to follow the insurgents' course.

External Support

Among the issues affecting Afghanistan's development is the interference by its neighbors in its internal affairs. Afghanistan shares a common border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Pakistan, and China. Pakistan and Iran are the most prominent of Afghanistan's neighbors, who have continued political and military interference in Afghanistan. While there is no solid evidence to prove Iran's support to the insurgents in Afghanistan, it has always tried to politically influence the internal affairs of Afghanistan by supporting different political and armed groups opposing the government of Afghanistan. In the case of Pakistan, there are many solid facts that prove its involvement in supporting many terrorist groups. The sole fact that Osama bin Laden was living in proximity of Pakistan's military academy is substantial evidence to prove its involvement with Al-Qaeda and its associates, but bin Laden is yet only one fact amongst many. Afghanistan shares a border of approximately 2,600 kilometers with Pakistan. The shared border with Pakistan runs from southern Afghanistan near Helmand and Kandahar to the east near Kunar and Nangarhar. The provinces along the border with Pakistan are predominantly populated by Pashtuns. On Pakistan's side, the common border runs along the provinces of Pashtunistan (previously called Northwest Frontier Province) and Baluchistan.

Initially, many Pakistani religious groups and citizens condemned the U.S. post-9/11 invasion of Afghanistan. They have, then and before, supported the Taliban and its efforts against Western "infidels" and its "puppet" government in Afghanistan. One of the key sources of support for insurgents is the powerful Inter Service Intelligence of Pakistan. The ISI has a long history interfering in Afghan business. The ISI's first major involvement in Afghanistan came in

1979 after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan when it partnered with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). ISI and many Afghan warlords, pro and anti-Taliban, have known each other since then. Many have described Pakistani support to the Taliban as a “strategic hedge” to maintain influence on internal Afghan politics.¹² Whatever the Pakistani government’s desires have been, it has greatly assisted not only the survival of the Afghan insurgency, but also the maintenance of its operational tempo.

Pakistan played a significant role in support of the Taliban from 1996 to 2001. The ISI and Pakistan’s military have been blamed for the success of the Taliban. Many Afghan leaders, including former Mujahideen commanders, have accused Pakistan of providing training, arms, and equipment to the Taliban. Gulbadin Hekmatyar, a former Mujahideen commander, has accused the former Pakistani interior minister, General Naseerullah Babar, as the mastermind behind the Taliban movement.¹³ Pakistan has continued to stand firm in providing moral, political, indirect military and financial support to Afghan insurgents since the collapse of the Taliban regime. Haqqani and the Taliban both have enjoyed Pakistan’s assistance in one form or another.

President Barack Obama while addressing the AfPak policy in March 2009 said “So let me be clear: Al Qaeda and its allies – the terrorists who planned and supported the 9/11 attacks – are in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Multiple intelligence estimates have warned that al Qaeda is actively planning attacks on the United States homeland from its safe haven in Pakistan. And if the Afghan government falls to the Taliban – or allows al Qaeda to go unchallenged – that

¹²Jayshree Bajoria and Eben Kaplan, *The ISI and Terrorism: Behind the Accusation* (New York: Council on Public Relations, 2011).

¹³Gulbadin Hekmatyar, *Secret Plans Open Faces*, ed. S. Fida Yunas, trans. Sher Zaman Taizi (Peshawar, Pakistan: University of Peshawar, 2004), 196, 146.

country will again be a base for terrorists who want to kill as many of our people as they possibly can.”¹⁴

When the NATO forces toppled the Taliban regime in late 2001, many Taliban members, including their leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, initially took refuge in Pakistan. Some of these members settled in the city of Quetta along the southern border of Afghanistan. Slowly with time, they established a council consisting of different Taliban members and named it the Quetta Shura. Although denied by the Pakistani government, the Quetta Shura has since then enjoyed a peaceful environment and has conducted several meetings on deciding the course of future operations inside Afghanistan. The strongest operational wing of the Quetta Shura is the Haqqani Network, also reported to be located on the outskirts of Quetta. A terrorist detained for involvement in the attacks of April 2012 in Nangarhar province of Afghanistan confessed that he and others had come across the border and worked for the Haqqani Network.¹⁵

Although, the Pakistani Taliban movement, known as Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), is considered an independent movement, it maintains close ties with the Quetta Shura and the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar. The TTP leader, Hakimullah Mehsud, was killed by a U.S. drone strike in November 2013 in northern Waziristan, Pakistan.¹⁶ Mehsud was wanted for his role in the 2009 suicide attack on the CIA outpost in Khost, Afghanistan, and he also claimed responsibility for the failed bombing attempt on Times Square, New York. When the U.S. succeeded in eliminating one of the leaders responsible for terrorism in the region, Imran Khan,

¹⁴President Barack Obama, “AfPak Policy” (speech, Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Washington, DC, 27 March 2009), <http://www.rediff.com/news/2009/mar/27obama-speech-on-new-policy-on-afghanisthan-and-pakistan.htm> (accessed 4 November 2013).

¹⁵Alissa J. Rubin, “Afghan Forces Quell Attack; Few Civilians are Killed,” *New York Times*, 16 April 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/17/world/asia/complex-attack-by-taliban-sends-message-to-the-west.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (accessed 11 December 2013).

¹⁶Tim Craig, “Drone Kills Taliban Chief Hakimullah Mahsud; Pakistan Accuses U.S. of Derailing Peace Talks,” *Washington Post*, 1 November 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/pakistani-official-accuses-us-of-sabotage-as-drone-targets-taliban-leaders-in-northwest/2013/11/01/1463d0c2-431d-11e3-b028-de922d7a3f47_story.html (accessed 1 November 2013).

one of Pakistan's top political figures, opposed the killing of Mehsud. In a recent interview with the *BBC*, Khan threatened to blockade the NATO supply route through Pakistan.¹⁷ Khan accused the U.S. of sabotaging the peace process between the Pakistani government and TTP. In an earlier interview, Mehsud laid down his conditions for peace talks, which included implementation of strict Sharia law in Pakistan.¹⁸

Pakistan and Afghanistan are both suffering from terrorism, but in contrast to Afghanistan, Pakistan believes that it can use the Afghan Taliban to secure Pakistan's role in Afghanistan's future. Pakistan is suffering from the country's own internal instability and the fear of future influence by a strong Afghan government on Pakistan's Pashtun tribes. Pakistan also fears Afghanistan's close relations with India, which it believes will threaten its stability in the future. In a recent publication by Tim Bird and Alex Marshall, the reasons behind Pakistan's intervention in Afghanistan have been summed as Pakistan's two greatest fears of "internal fragmentation and, potentially, disintegration" and "the looming presence of India [in Afghanistan] – a fear not short of paranoia."¹⁹

In order to tackle all these challenges, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) has attempted to fight terrorism and narcotics while simultaneously working on reconciliation and a peace process. The current President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, has continuously asked the Taliban leaders to join the peace process. Karzai understands the role Pakistan can play in persuading the Taliban in starting peace talks with GIRoA. He has conducted numerous visits to Pakistan inviting it to play a positive role in promoting the peace process between the Taliban and GIRoA. With almost no practical response from the Pakistani

¹⁷BBC News, "Hakimullah Mehsud: Imran Khan Seeks Nato Blockade Over Killing," *BBC*, 6 November 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24838682> (accessed 6 November 2013).

¹⁸BBC News, "Hakimullah Mehsud: Imran Khan Seeks Nato Blockade Over Killing."

¹⁹Tim Bird, *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 186.

government, the frustrated Afghan president has also many times requested U.S. support and its political and military intervention in Pakistan. While the Karzai administration is continuing to use the elements of soft power for bringing peace and prosperity to Afghanistan, the ANSF is playing its role as an instrument of hard power by fighting Afghan insurgents and saving Afghan lives by often sacrificing their own. In the following chapter, the author will examine the role and capabilities of the General Directorate of Police Special Units – one of the elite counterterrorism and counternarcotic forces of Afghanistan.

GDPSU

The General Directorate of Police Special Units (GDPSU) was established in 2009.²⁰ GDPSU was added to the Afghan Police structure underneath the Deputy Minister of Interior (Security). GDPSU was created to supervise and provide administrative support to the existing elite forces under Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan. GDPSU is also responsible for coordinating operations not only among the elite police units, but also with the Ministry of Defense, National Directorate of Security – the lead intelligence agency of Afghanistan, ISAF, and other Afghan government entities as necessary.

GDPSU has three main tactical units, which are responsible for conducting CT and CN operations; the directorate also has an intelligence cell that has operators in over 19 different provinces of Afghanistan.²¹ Since its establishment, GDPSU has expanded its presence by training and equipping Quick Reaction Forces (QRFs) in 25 different provinces of Afghanistan including provinces such as Kandahar and Helmand in south and Kunar and Nooristan in eastern Afghanistan. In 2012 and 2013, two training centers in the Wardak and Logar provinces of

²⁰General Directorate of Police Special Units, *Guzaresh E Maloomat Fushur Da Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Police*.

²¹Ibid.

Afghanistan were established to train QRFs and the members of its three main commando units respectively.

The three main responsibilities of the units under GDPSU are: 1) counterterrorism, 2) counternarcotics and narco-traffickers, and 3) interdiction of organized criminals.²² The Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID) of the Afghanistan Ministry of Interior mostly handles interdiction of organized criminal groups and organizations, while the GDPSU provide assistance in arresting high profile criminals and their associates. GDPSU is considered one of the most effective elite units of the ANSF in conducting preemptive operations as per intelligence reports from around Afghanistan.

The special units of GDPSU have conducted 442 CT and CN operations of which 120 were conducted independently by the Afghan Special Police.²³ During these operations, the forces have succeeded to kill 145 and capture 318-armed members of the Taliban (Figure 4). In this chapter, the author will examine the role and effectiveness of three main special units of GDPSU in countering terrorism and narcotics.

²²General Directorate of Police Special Units, *Guzaresh E Maloomat Fushur Da Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Police*.

²³Ministry of Interior, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Naqshe Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Dar Mubarez Alaihe Terrorism*.

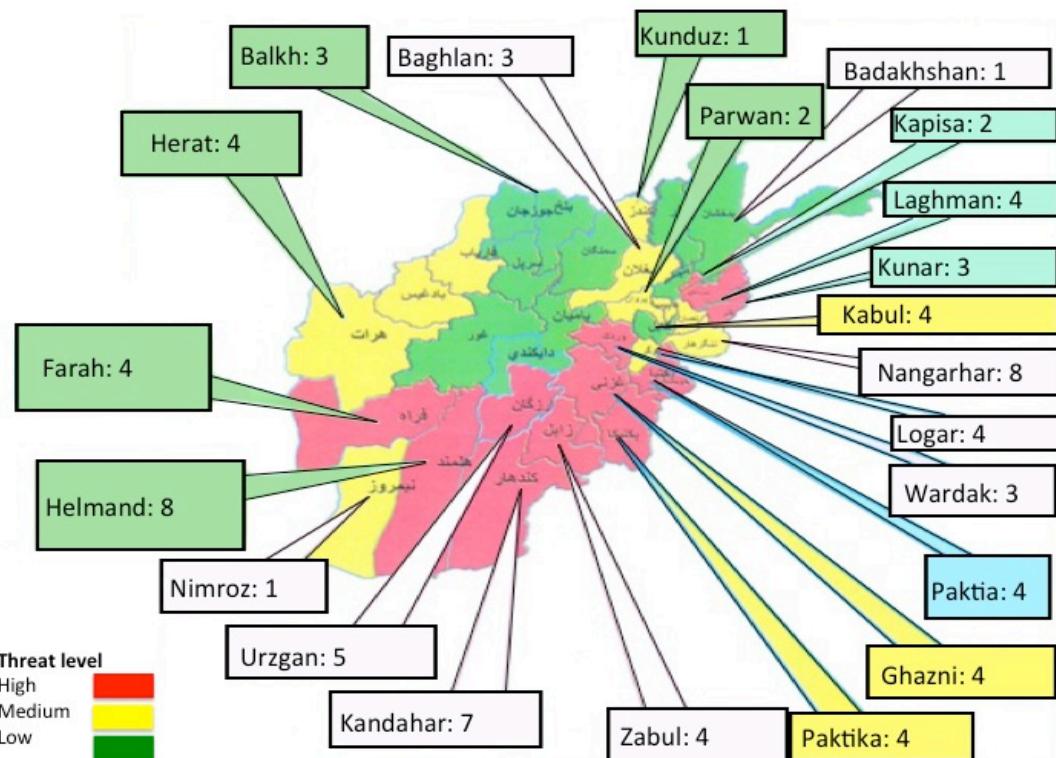


Figure 3: GDPSU Operations during 2nd Quarter of 2013.

Source: Translated by author - Ministry of Interior, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Naqshe Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Dar Mubarezha Alaihe Terrorism

Commando Unit 333

The Commando Unit 333 was the first special police unit established in 2003.²⁴ Unit 333, which began its operations under the supervision of British Special Forces (BSF), was initially considered a pilot project. The unit was designed to accompany BSF during their search operations in the initial years of OEF. Members of the unit were trained and equipped by the BSF. Unit 333 was involved in conducting CT and CN operations including seizure and destruction of weapon caches and mobile laboratories of opium and hashish. During a training

²⁴General Directorate of Police Special Units, *Guzaresh E Maloomat Fushur Da Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Police*.

exercise in 2010, General Stanley McChrystal was impressed by members of Unit 333. During an interview at the end of the exercise, he praised the unit saying, “While you can use normal units to go out and secure areas and secure people, there’s a certain percentage of any insurgency or narcotics elements that have to be targeted for arrest or even for killing if they don’t want to be arrested. So the key is how precise can you be so that you don’t harm other people, and that’s where it takes units like this with extraordinary . . . maturity, intelligence, and focus.”²⁵

Commando Unit 333 is located just outside Kabul City. The unit is comprised of a mixed ethnic composition tied together by profession and love of country. Two officers of the 333 were selected to attend the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst – the British Army Officer School. Many others have since attended short-term courses in planning, logistic, and special operations training supervised by U.S., British, and other international forces. In a correspondence dated 18 November 2013 between the author and Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Hashmat Hanifi, Deputy Commander of 333, with regards to the difference between the 333 and other elite units of ANSF, LTC Hanifi wrote, “In our view, Commando 333 is much more capable and motivated than any other forces in the country because it has the experience of pan Afghanistan and it can operate in any part of the country without any issues; also they are trained by the most professional soldiers of the world. However, 333 still needs more to achieve. Other Afghan elite units are good too, but they don’t have the experience 333 has. Commando 333 is recruited from across Afghanistan and the soldiers represent all tribes and provinces of Afghanistan. That makes 333 a small Afghanistan.”²⁶

²⁵Soraya S. Nelson, “Commandos Crack Down On Afghan Drug Trade.” *National Public Radio*, 17 March 2010, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124731730> (accessed 23 January 2014).

²⁶Hashmat Hanifi, e-mail message to author, “Capabilities of Commando Unit 333,” 18 November 2013.

The unit is capable of conducting operations nationwide, but it still relies on the airlift capabilities of NATO forces in Afghanistan. In 2012, 333 has conducted more than one hundred operations in eight different provinces. As a result of the operations, more than 140 insurgents were killed or captured; and 168 different types of automatic weapons, 30,195 rounds of ammunition, 114 landmines, and 1,497 kilograms of narcotics were seized.²⁷ During 2012, the unit suffered 16 casualties: two were killed in action, and 14 wounded.²⁸

On 13 September 2011, the Taliban attacked the U.S. Embassy, NATO headquarters, and three other locations in Kabul.²⁹ The attack was considered one of the most complex and well planned in the history of the insurgency in Afghanistan. Many attacks have been carried out by the Taliban in the past, but September 13 was the first time insurgents carried out multiple, simultaneous attacks in the heart of Kabul. The author was present at the scene while insurgents were showering rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) from a building under construction. They aimed the RPGs primarily towards the U.S. Embassy and NATO headquarters. After five hours of chaos and uncertainty, the Kabul City Police (KCP) encircled the building, blocking all exits and entrances. Then Commando Unit 333 arrived. After a seven-hour, fierce battle, members of Commando Unit 333 cleared a 12-story building, killing five terrorists armed with AK-47s, PKM machine guns, RPGs, and suicide vests; the Commando Unit 333 suffered two wounded. (See Figure 4.)

²⁷General Directorate of Police Special Units, *Guzaresh E Maloomat Fushur Da Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Police*.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Mirwais Harooni and Hamid Shalizai, "Taliban Attack Across Kabul, Target U.S. Embassy," Reuters, 13 September 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/13/us-afghanistan-blast-idUSTRE78B61S20110913> (accessed 18 December 2013).



Figure 4: Members of the Commando Unit 333 clearing building held by terrorists during the incident of 13 September 2011

Source: Picture taken by Public Affairs Office the Ministry of Interior, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Commando Unit 333 was designed to conduct CN and CT operations to hamper the insurgent activities. Over the course of years, the unit has climbed many steps of proficiency and its capabilities have increased significantly. The unit is now capable of countering the deadliest terrorist attacks, and has conducted preemptive operations based on intelligence reports. Commando Unit 333 continues to partner with ISAF and BSF. The unit conducts many independent operations, but still relies on the airlift capabilities of the NATO forces in Afghanistan. Years of success and experience of the well-trained 333 has resulted in the establishment of Commando Unit 444 and the Crisis Response Unit (CRU).

Commando Unit 444

Commando Unit 444 was established in 2006 to conduct CN operations, the eradication of opium fields, and targeting members of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda associated with narcotics production and/or trafficking. Operations conducted by 444 are planned based on intelligence reports through GDPSU's organic intelligence cell and other government and ISAF intelligence services. The unit is located in one of the most high-threat areas of Afghanistan: Helmand Province in the heart of southern Afghanistan. Helmand Province is considered the hub of narcotics production and distribution, and is in close proximity of the Afghan-Iranian border and the Afghan-Pak border.

Commando Unit 444 is a key wing of the GDPSU. Since its establishment, it has conducted many successful operations, which have resulted in the seizure of tons of narcotics. The unit has also succeeded in arresting individuals involved in narcotics production and its trade. The 444 conducted 89 operations during the 2nd quarter of 2013.³⁰ During these operations, they successfully arrested 66 members of the Taliban associated with the production and/or trade of narcotics and killed 37 terrorists in action. The unit also seized 6,340 kilograms of narcotics.³¹ During the course of these operations, the unit suffered only three casualties, of which only one was killed in action and the other two were wounded. Commando Unit 444 is capable of conducting independent operations, but like Commando Unit 333, the unit suffers from the lack of air support and airlifts, and must rely upon ISAF during their operations.

Since its inception, members of Commando Unit 444 have been trained and partnered with ISAF forces, in particular with the British Special Forces. The United Kingdom has been the lead nation in providing support to the 444. Members of 444 are highly motivated and well

³⁰General Directorate of Police Special Units, *Guzaresh E Maloomat Fushur Da Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Police*.

³¹Ibid.

trained. Individuals are selected based on their physical and mental ability to conduct special operations. Selected individuals receive their fundamental training at the newly built training center in Wardak Province, approximately fifty miles from Kabul.³² Upon completion of initial training, individuals are sent to their respective units where they are mentored by their international partners in the field.

The unit has successfully conducted many joint and independent operations since its inception. Commando Unit 444 is considered one of the elite units of the ANSF. Although the unit has been effective in conducting CN operations, it still lacks many capabilities necessary in confronting well-organized narco-terrorists. As stated earlier, the unit is still dependent on ISAF and NATO air capabilities. Additionally, the unit does not have sufficient modern anti-IED equipment and secure lines of communication.³³ Although the GDPSU main training center located in Wardak is continuously conducting training cycles, due to considerable distance and lack of air transportation from Helmand to Wardak the officers and NCOs of 444 have not been successful in regularly following their refresher courses.

Although lacking many modern capabilities, Commando Unit 444 is committed to bringing peace and stability to their war-torn nation. Their abilities have been put to test in many hostile territories of Afghanistan and their headquarters is located in the heart of southern Afghanistan, which is considered the Taliban stronghold. They have not only preserved their presence in that area, but also continuously targeted narco-terrorist cells and networks.

³²General Directorate of Police Special Units, *Guzaresh E Maloomat Fushur Da Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Police*.

³³Ministry of Interior, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Naqshe Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Dar Mubarez Alaihe Terrorism*.



Figure 5: General Abdul Rahman Rahman, former Deputy Minister of Interior presenting certificate of appreciation to a member of BSF for his mentorship to the Commando Unit 444 in Helmand, Afghanistan

Source: Picture taken by Public Affairs Office of Deputy Minister of Interior, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Crisis Response Unit – CRU

The Crisis Response Unit (CRU) is an elite CT unit, which was added to the Afghan National Police Force in May 2007.³⁴ The unit was designed as a quick reaction force to counterterrorist attacks in Kabul. In addition to its role as a CT unit, it also conducts law enforcement operations to tackle organized criminal groups involved in kidnappings and narco-trafficking. During the second quarter of 2013, the unit conducted 15 operations in Kabul and in two northern provinces of Afghanistan. As a result, the unit successfully arrested 17 members of

³⁴General Directorate of Police Special Units, *Guzaresh E Maloomat Fushur Da Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Police*

the Taliban and killed another 20 in the course of operations.³⁵ The unit suffered no losses in these operations.

The CRU has well trained and equipped operators that are mentored by and partnered with coalition forces, in particular the British Special Forces, USARSF, the New Zealand Special Forces, and the Norwegian Special Forces. The unit goes through the same training cycle as the other GDPSU units. The unit is capable of conducting night raids in the most vulnerable areas in Afghanistan. The unit was praised for its proficiency in conducting these night raids in an exclusive report conducted by a NATO media section.³⁶ Although the unit is capable of conducting CT operations, it too relies heavily on coalition forces when it comes to airlift capabilities and intelligence related to target development.

In a correspondence between the author and Major Khoshal Saadat, a USACGSC graduate and the Commander of CRU, the author asked about how he sees the role of the CRU in conducting CT operations. Major Saadat answered, “CRU is a police unit, and according to Afghan law, only police can arrest criminals and terrorists inside the country. So currently it’s doing that, but all CT ops are intelligence led, so it’s vital to have precise actionable intel for CT ops. CT should be really the national intelligence mission because it has links and roots outside the country, so there should be a close link between GDPSU and NDS because if the CT targets grow beyond the country, then it has to be shared and discussed with other agencies and even other countries. In Afghanistan’s case, its ISAF and U.S. agencies should be informed and shared with.”³⁷

³⁵Ministry of Interior, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Naqshe Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Dar Mubareza Alaihe Terrorism*.

³⁶NATO, “Afghan Unit Carries Out Night Operations,” *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-7DD38767-E17BA28A/natolive/news_85786.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 10 December 2013).

³⁷Khoshal Saadat, e-mail to author, “GDPSU’s Capabilities,” 21 October 2013.

Although, the CRU is the newest tactical unit of the GDPSU, during the past four years it has been successful in reaching the same level of proficiency as Commando Unit 333 and Commando Unit 444. CRU has demonstrated its proficiency in neutralizing terrorist attacks during two major security incidents in 2013. In the terrorist attack of 4 February 2013, at the direction of traffic police, members of CRU successfully contained the threat and killed five terrorists while clearing the building. On 10 June 2013, at the Kabul International Airport, the unit killed five of seven insurgents with no casualties to civilians or security forces. CRU is progressing with a steady pace, and it has become a symbol of proficiency and valor for other Afghan police officers in Kabul.

Conclusion

The Afghan National Police is the primary law enforcement body in Afghanistan. It operates in accordance with the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Due to its militaristic structure and organization adapted from the old Soviet system and the current security situation of Afghanistan, the ANP is involved in fighting insurgency as a paramilitary force on an everyday basis. While not all of the ANP is professionally capable of fighting insurgencies, the GDPSU is designed, trained, and equipped to target terrorists, narcotics traffickers and producers, and other organized criminal groups that may support the deterioration of Afghani security.

As it has been brought to light, the insurgents in Afghanistan have constantly used terrorism and narcotics as vital means to support their end state. The GDPSU, as an elite CT and CN force with its capability to conduct operations across Afghanistan, has the ability to simultaneously target not only terrorist cells, but also the narcotics production and distribution networks, which is one of the vital financial resources of the Taliban. The production of narcotics is a vital requirement to aiding the insurgency in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban. While narcotics is the financial means for the Taliban's and other insurgent groups' continuation, terrorism is the psychological tool that allows them to influence and control civilians. These two

strong factors of insurgency in Afghanistan are not only the most critical capabilities of insurgents, but also their critical requirement. Based on the center of gravity analysis of Carl von Clausewitz, the center of gravity of an enemy force can be effected through its critical requirements and capabilities.

By considering the extremist ideology as its center of gravity, the author would argue that by targeting terrorist and narcotics cells, the GDPSU may not eliminate the insurgency in Afghanistan. These tactical actions, however, can definitely threaten the survival of the extremist ideology. Simultaneous targeting in the financial and psychological elements of insurgents in Afghanistan will degrade their capabilities of using their hard power. As a result, it is possible that the insurgents will resort to the use of soft power, agreeing to negotiate or entering a reconciliation process, which is in line with the strategic objectives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

In this chapter, the author discussed how GDPSU operations have affected the insurgents in Afghanistan by targeting narco-terrorists, and how the continuation of such operations can further degrade capabilities of insurgents. The next chapter is a case study of the Colombian approach in fighting the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) from 1997 to 2002. The reason for choosing the FARC in Colombia as a case study is its similarities to the current Taliban in Afghanistan; i.e., their heavy reliance on terrorism, narcotics, and external support.

Table 1: CT and CN operations conducted by GDPSU from 4 April 2009 to 6 July 2013

NO.	Description	Quantity
1	CT and CN operations conducted	2,734
2	Crystal Heroine	748.5 kg
3	Heroine	2329.5 kg
4	Morphine	393.0 kg
5	Opium	177,788.0 kg
6	Hashish	34,706.5 kg
7	Destruction of mobile laboratories and centers for homemade road mines	182
8	Suspects arrested	2,160
9	Insurgents killed in action	634
10	Suicide Vests	46

Source: General Directorate of Police Special Units, Guzaresh E Maloomat Fushur Da Re Yasat Omomi Qeta Aat Khas Police

FARC AND COLOMBIAN COIN MODEL

The FARC in Colombia and the Taliban in Afghanistan have many similarities. Both the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Colombia are supported by the U.S. in fighting narco-terrorists in their respective states. Although the Taliban and the FARC have different ideologies, Islamic-extremism and Marxism respectively, both the Taliban and the FARC want to overthrow the central government and drive out the U.S. from their countries.³⁸ Like the Taliban, the FARC also relies heavily on terrorism, narcotics, and external support for reaching their objectives and expanding its sphere of influence in Colombia. In this chapter, FARC's insurgency is examined, followed by an examination of the Colombian COIN approach in tackling the FARC. The author will examine the impacts of Plan Colombia and the Colombian President Alvaro Uribe's policy in confronting the FARC.

³⁸Paul E. Saskiewicz, "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP) Marxist-Leninist Insurgency or Criminal Enterprise?" (Master's thesis, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, 2005).

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC

There are many publications and articles available on the study of FARC of its beginnings and history. Regarding its origins, Major David L. DeAtley stated in his monograph that it goes back to La Violencia, which occurred sometime during 1948 to 1958.³⁹ During this time, Colombia suffered from internal civil conflict between Liberals and Conservatives, and the assassination of Liberal presidential candidate, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, who would have likely taken the office in the 1950 elections. Major DeAtley argues, “whether or not La Violencia caused the resurgence of guerilla bands in the Colombian countryside, it clearly led to the birth of FARC.”⁴⁰

Insurgencies typically use a protracted approach starting with a strategic defense, which is mainly focused on forces buildup and “hit and run” tactics; the second phase is guerrilla warfare, which is followed by the final and the most dangerous phase of mobile conventional warfare.⁴¹ Colonel Alberto Mejia of the Colombian Army in his “Strategic Research Project” for the U.S. Army War College has argued that the seventh guerilla conference of 1982 marked the end of the strategic phase for FARC and started the mobile, conventional attacks by 1998.⁴² Colonel Mejia further writes that it was then that FARC divided into 15 fronts, surrounding the capital city of Bogota for the first time, and threatened the very existence of the central government.⁴³ The primary purpose of this section of the case study is to illustrate how FARC reached this stage and its similarity to the current Taliban strategy.

³⁹David L. DeAtley, “Illicit Drug Funding: The Surprising Systemic Similarities between the FARC and the Taliban” (master’s thesis, Ft Leavenworth, KS: USACGSC: School of Advanced Military Studies, 2010).

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Bard E. O’Neill, “Insurgent Strategies,” in *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Dulles, VA: Brassey’s Inc., 1990), 31.

⁴²Alberto Mejia, “Colombia’s National Security Strategy, A New ‘COIN’ Approach” (Master’s thesis, U.S. Army War College, 2008).

⁴³Ibid.

In a section of his book, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*, Bard O’Neal writes that, “Strategy is defined as a systematic, integrated, and orchestrated use of various means to achieve goals.”⁴⁴ A closer look at the means available to both the FARC in Colombia and the Taliban in Afghanistan reveals that similarities exist not only in the means available to them, but also in how they have employed the available means. In simple words, their objectives may be different, but their ways and means are similar. The FARC’s financial locomotive has been very much fueled by the illegal production and trade of narcotics, external support, and kidnapping and extortion, which is very similar to that of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Colombia and Afghanistan both have a long history of instability and civil war. In her book *Narco Terrorism*, Rachel Ehrenfeld has written that Colombia has the most violent history in South America and that, “Colombians [have] specialize[d] civil wars, having had scores of them.”⁴⁵ Where there is instability, there are opportunities for criminal organizations to invest. By the early 1990s, the Colombian government had weak political and judicial institutions. The government was greatly mistrusted because of its corruption, and the narcotic business was emerging as a massive illegal economy.⁴⁶ This is very similar to the current situation in Afghanistan where this year Afghanistan has yet again ranked first in opium production in the world.⁴⁷ For both the Taliban in Afghanistan and the FARC in Colombia, retention of a war economy is very important. Narco-production and narco-trafficking are the largest moneymakers for both of these persistent terrorist groups. Where narcotics buy weapons and means for the

⁴⁴O’Neill, *Insurgent Strategies*, 31.

⁴⁵Rachel Ehrenfeld, *Narco Terrorism* (New York: BasicBooks, 1990), 76.

⁴⁶Alberto Mejia, 5.

⁴⁷NBC News, “Afghanistan Opium Production Hits Record Despite Billions Spent to Combat Trade,” *World*, 13 November 2013, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/afghanistan-opium-production-hits-record-despite-billions-spent-combat-trade-v21425925> (accessed 20 January 2014).

FARC and the Taliban, terrorism creates a sphere of influence and fear allowing them to control different societies in both countries.

In Colombia, people of all ages, gender, and social groups have suffered the terror of FARC. From businessmen to diplomats to government officials, all have been victims of terrorist attacks or targeted for assassination, kidnapping, and/or extortion.⁴⁸ Bolstered by drug money, FARC succeeded in task-organizing itself into small columns.⁴⁹ Guerilla actions targeted small army and police units, and by the mid-1990s, the FARC surged to 10,000 members dispersed over 60 fronts.⁵⁰ In a guerilla attack on a Colombian military base in 1996, FARC killed 54 and wounded 17 Colombian military members.⁵¹ It was not until the 1990s when FARC's ability to continue guerilla operations started to decrease, which subsequently increased the terrorist attacks upon civilians. Heavily financed by drug money, by 2001 FARC had grown to 20,000 members with a presence in over 60 percent of Colombian territory.⁵² Its stated goal was to overthrow the democratic government by any means necessary.

In 2002, just minutes before President Alvaro Uribe's presidential inauguration ceremony, FARC groups rained down upon the city of Bogota with mortar shells, killing 15 and injuring many other civilians.⁵³ One of the deadliest terrorist attacks was when a car containing

⁴⁸Mejia, 13.

⁴⁹Thomas A. Marks, "A Model Counterinsurgency: Uribe's Colombia (2002-2006) vs FARC," *Military Review* (2007): 47.

⁵⁰Jon-Paul Maddaloni, "An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3-24" (Monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: USACGSC: School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), 16.

⁵¹Pamela Mercer, "Rebels Kill 80 in Strongest Attacks in Colombia in Decades," *The New York Times*, 2 September 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/09/02/world/rebels-kill-80-in-strongest-attacks-in-colombia-in-decades.html> (accessed 20 January 2014).

⁵²Charles E. Wynne, "Colombia More Than Just A Drug Problem" (Report, Washington DC: National Defense University, 2003), 5.

⁵³BBC News World Edition, "Deadly Welcome for Colombian Head," Americas, 8 August 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2179834.stm>.

200 kilograms (kgs) of explosives detonated near an elite, high class, social and business club in Bogota, killing 36 and wounding more than 200 people.⁵⁴

FARC continues to target elites, political leaders, businessmen, and other civilians trying to reestablish the sphere of influence that they had before the commencement of *Plan Colombia* and the election of President Uribe, which will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter. Before exploring the success of Plan Colombia and the effects of the new policy crafted by President Uribe, the author will analyze the significance of external support in FARC's struggle for power.

FARC's approach to insurgency is modeled on the version of Vietnam's *People's War*, but is inspired more by Che Guevara than Mao Zedong's approach.⁵⁵ In all three cases, whether Vietnam, Cuba, or China, revolutions and insurgencies have usually had an external source of political and/or materiel support. Among Colombia's other neighboring countries, Colombia shares its longest land border with Venezuela. Venezuela and Colombia both emerged from the collapse of Gran Colombia in 1830.⁵⁶ Venezuela is a socialist country with an anti-U.S. outlook.

The relations between the FARC and the Venezuelan government have been very ambiguous. Hugo Chavez, the President of Venezuela, 1999-2013, on many occasions supported the FARC by letting it use Venezuela's territory. President Chavez denied providing sanctuary to FARC members. During a raid on a FARC camp in 2008 by the Colombian Army, e-mails and documents were recovered indicating close ties between FARC and the government of Hugo Chaves. The evidence indicated that FARC relied upon cross-border sanctuaries for its survival,

⁵⁴BBC News World Edition, "Colombian Police Raid Hit by Explosion," Americas, 15 February 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2762587.stm> (accessed 23 January 2014).

⁵⁵Marks, "A Model Counterinsurgency: Uribe's Colombia (2002-2006) vs FARC," 42.

⁵⁶*The World Factbook 2013-14* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013), s.v. "Venezuela," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html> (accessed 20 January 2014).

and President Chaves considered FARC a strategic ally against a perceived U.S. threat.⁵⁷ The expectation and reliance between Chaves and FARC extensively assisted the FARC in providing safe havens for the rebel groups, which is very similar to the cross-border sanctuaries on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan for the Taliban.

Plan Colombia and Alvaro Uribe

So far, the author has attempted to explain the FARC's approach against the Colombian government and showed similarities between the FARC in Colombia and the Taliban in Afghanistan. How Colombia managed to push back the FARC and reverse their successes is the main question of the following section. The Colombian government has been trying to construct and execute a successful COIN strategy for decades. If we look at FARC as a complex interconnected system, we will find that they are not only interconnected, but also interdependent on many small and large sub-systems. (See Figure 6.) FARC is dependent on three main subsystems: (1) Terrorism, (2) Narcotics, and (3) External Support. The author has already discussed the importance of these systems in the aforementioned section of this chapter.

⁵⁷BBC News Latin America and Caribbean, “Colombian Farc Rebels’ Links to Venezuela Detailed,” Americas, 10 May 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13343810> (accessed 23 January 2014).

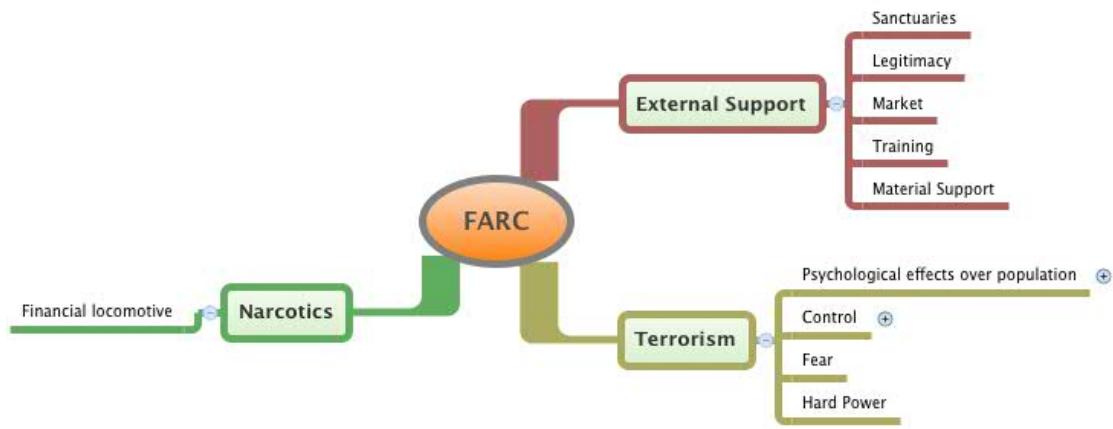


Figure 6: FARC as an interdependent system.

Source: Created by author.

In Colombia, FARC was considered a problem for a very long time based purely on one central and critical factor, narcotics. It was not only the Colombian government, but also the U.S. that believed that every other aspect of the insurgency was merely a byproduct of the drug-trade in Colombia.⁵⁸ The COIN model in Colombia prior to 1998 was based on an approach that dealt with narcotics and terrorism in isolation from each other. This approach started to slowly change by the end of 1997 with the commencement of Plan Colombia, which was further refined during President Uribe's administration. Military reform of the Colombian military before Uribe took office, large increases in U.S. funding from 1997 onwards, and Uribe's new policy that oriented the state's position from negotiating to confronting the FARC contributed to and, not only altered the approach, but more importantly dropped the barrier that had separated CN from CT.⁵⁹

Plan Colombia is the term that marks the increase in U.S. funding in support for this approach against the narco-terrorism nexus in Columbia. The U.S. has assisted Colombia for

⁵⁸Marks, 43.

⁵⁹Ibid., 41.

decades, but the dramatic increase in funding and re-focus started in 1997 when Colombia's neighbors Peru and Bolivia succeeded in sharply reducing coca cultivation. This sharp decrease moved the illegal drug industry from the north to southern and eastern Colombia.⁶⁰ (See Table 2.) The year 1998 marked another decisive turn in U.S. policy when Andres Pastrana assumed the Colombian presidency. According to estimates, in early 1997-98 FARC's revenue from the drug-industry amounted to \$500 million a year.⁶¹ This amount was enough to fund a formidable war machine. In Colombia, the drug-trade enabled FARC to inflict serious defeats on the Colombian Army, and in the U.S., illegal drug use killed some 52,000 people. It was a problem without borders.

Table 2: Comparison of coca production in Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia from 1995 to 1999

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Peru	460	435	325	240	175
Bolivia	240	215	200	150	70
Colombia	230	300	350	435	520

Source: Created by author based on data derived from Gabriel Marcella, Army War College (U.S.), and Dante B. Fascell North-South Center (FL), Plan Colombia: The Strategic and Operational Imperatives, Implementing Plan Colombia special series (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 4.

Pastrana and many senior officials in the U.S., particularly in the Clinton administration thought Colombia needed a major boost in support and a new comprehensive strategy. It was argued that Colombia needed a long-term national plan rather than fitful short-term steps. In November 1999, \$165 million of supplemental aid was added to the \$124 million that was appropriated earlier for Colombia.⁶² This major increase in funding made Colombia the third

⁶⁰Gabriel Marcella, Army War College (U.S.), and Dante B. Fascell North-South Center (Fla.), *Plan Colombia: The Strategic and Operational Imperatives*, Implementing Plan Colombia special series (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College , 2001), 2.

⁶¹ Marks, 4.

⁶²Marcella, 7.

largest recipient of U.S. aid after Israel and Egypt. As a result, Plan Colombia was born. Plan Colombia's strategy was very simple: it linked economic development and security with the peace process.

The central premise of the plan was that drug money feeds the insurgents, and if drug money were taken away, then the insurgents would have less capability to mount attacks on the Colombian government. Plan Colombia required a major financial commitment by the U.S. The U.S. agreed to aid Plan Colombia, and the main elements of the U.S. aid package included:

1) Expansion of CN operations in southern Colombia – \$390 million; 2) Alternative economic development – \$81 million; 3) Increased interdiction efforts – \$129.4 million; and 4) Assistance for Colombian Police – 115.6 million. The first two years of the plan targeted the high threat areas of southern Colombia for immediate decrease in coca production. Its main activities included promotion of dignified employment and sustainable development of the peasant class that was displaced by the elimination of coca production; strengthening of the judicial system; protection of human rights; interdiction of coca shipment and eradication; and making legitimate agriculture competitive.

Although a strong plan, Plan Colombia's riskiest factor was the slippery slope of the peace process. Pastrana thought that in order to bring insurgents to the peace table, he had to create the preliminary conditions for the peace process, but it is believed that he went too far in creating these conditions. In January 1999, Pastrana granted the FARC a demilitarized zone of approximately 16,000 square-miles.⁶³ It covered almost four percent of the national territory with a population of only 96,000. The militarized zone allowed the FARC to regroup, train, and use the area for coca cultivation. This was the weakest part of Plan Colombia, and was immediately altered by the new administration of Alvaro Uribe in 2002.

⁶³ Marcella, 5.

Alvaro Uribe, a former governor of Antioquia (1995-97), was elected as the president of Colombia in 2002. Uribe brought principal changes in state policies that were ill formed to counter the security challenges of an insurgency based on the drug-trade.⁶⁴ In Colombia, every elected government has the constitutional mandate of drafting the National Development Plan. The National Development Plan is the process of integrating all elements of national power to develop democracy and economic prosperity.⁶⁵ Many Colombian governments in the past were focused on social investment, education, economic growth, and reconciliation with the FARC. Security was one of the very last item on their list. Uribe's strategy and vision was the opposite of his predecessors. Security was on top of his list.

Uribe was not the only one who reformed his state policies. In the U.S., President George W. Bush Jr. replaced the Clinton administration early in 2001. President Bush brought significant changes in U.S. policies towards Colombia by addressing the Colombian problem not solely as a narcotics problem, but one that dealt with both terrorism and narcotics simultaneously. In the U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002, it states that, "In Colombia, we recognize the link between terrorist and extremist groups that challenge the security of the state and drug trafficking activities that help finance the operations of such groups. We are working to help Colombia defend its democratic institutions and defeat illegal armed groups of both the left and right by extending effective sovereignty over the entire national territory and provide basic security to the Colombian people."⁶⁶

The Colombian problem was revisited and with extensive U.S. commitment, a new approach was designed by Alvaro Uribe. He believed that in order to achieve socio-economic

⁶⁴Marks, 41.

⁶⁵Mejia, 15.

⁶⁶The White House, "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 17 September 2002, 10, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf> (accessed 27 January 2013).

growth the government must invest in security.⁶⁷ (See Figure 7.) Security was the key to tackle the criminal, narcotics, and terrorism challenges. According to the new policy, the citizens and state of Colombia were faced by a combination of terrorism, illegal drug-trade, and traffic of arms and ammunition.⁶⁸ It was critical to conduct CT and CN simultaneously to disrupt the insurgency as a whole.



Figure 7: Alvaro Uribe's Virtuous Cycle of Democratic Security and Defense Policy

Source: Created by author based on data derived from Alberto Mejia, “Colombia’s National Security Strategy, A New ‘COIN’ Approach” (2008): 17.

A defense strategy was drafted by the Colombian Ministry of Defense (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, or MDN), which was used by both the military and National Police as the

⁶⁷Mejia, 16.

⁶⁸Marks, 46.

strategic guidance.⁶⁹ Although the central elements remained illegal drug trade and protection of the population, the CN operations were never conducted in isolation from CT. The operations were conducted in small groups conducting specific missions over the target areas. The aim was to conduct well-synchronized operations in order to stifle insurgent activities. Targeting insurgents' activities in different areas simultaneously resulted in disruption of their system.

The different subsystems of FARC were targeted by the Colombian forces, and the more the previously mentioned subsystems were targeted, the more it affected the whole system. Increase in scale and span of targeting forced insurgents to move, especially the key leaders, which presented the special operators targets of opportunity. Loss of leaders resulted in surrender of small and large insurgent groups, which significantly assisted the Colombian military in psychological warfare.⁷⁰ Fewer insurgents in an area meant greater freedom of movement for the Colombian forces, which resulted in safety and security, allowing businesses to pick up and the economy to improve. Together, Plan Colombia complemented by Uribe' policy, was considered a successful COIN model, built upon targeting terrorism and narcotics simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

The events of 11 September 2001 brought many changes in world politics, particularly in U.S. foreign policy. Two major changes discussed in the course of this paper are the effectiveness of simultaneous CT and CN operations in the war on terror in Afghanistan and the addition of CT to complement CN efforts in Colombia. Afghanistan and Colombia are each examples of war-torn countries facing insurgency and narco-terrorism over many years. In the case of Afghanistan, the struggle continues. After the fall of the final Soviet-backed government, a decade-old insurgency (1979-1991), the insurgents, then called the Mujahideen, instead of celebrating their

⁶⁹Shanker.

⁷⁰Marks, 48.

victory, started fighting each other, trying to accumulate more power for their particular faction. The Mujahideen were supported by Pakistan throughout most of the struggle against the Soviets. Pakistan agreed to be the gateway of Western and Arab support because Pakistan had its own hidden agenda. After the fall of Dr. Najeeb's government in 1991, Pakistan wanted a government aligned with Pakistan's national interests.

Frustrated with the power struggle between the different Mujahideen factions, Pakistan's ISI designed a new plan with a new actor composed of young, radical Afghan refugees in Pakistan called the Taliban. The Taliban took over most of Afghanistan, defeating almost every faction on their way. By 1996, the Taliban controlled 90 percent of the country. The Taliban were later joined by Al-Qaeda and their leader Osama bin Laden, who had been looking for a sanctuary since 1991 and found his foothold in Afghanistan. Alas, it was from Afghanistan that he planned the attack on the U.S., and on 11 September 2001, he executed his horrific and inhumane plan that shook the world.

President George W. Bush Jr., then the President of the U.S., made a commitment to bring bin Laden to justice. After negotiations failed with the Taliban, the U.S. and NATO forces launched attacks across Afghanistan, and in November 2001, the capital city of Kabul fell. In 2011, bin Laden was killed in a U.S. covert operation in Pakistan. Since the fall of Kabul in 2001, despite bin Laden's death, the war on terror in Afghanistan and the region continues. NATO forces, and in particular those of the U.S., have not only continued the war on terror, but also helped the GIROA to rebuild the ANSF. As the war on terror continued and the ANSF grew stronger, the Taliban and its Al-Qaeda associates lost their capabilities to continue their conventional fight. They switched to hit and run tactics; i.e., terrorism, which included suicide attacks; vehicle-borne, improvised explosive devices (VBIED); roadside bombs; and ambushes, which not only targeted the foreign and local military, but also innocent civilians including women and children.

Since its inception, the Taliban has relied heavily on Pakistan's military and materiel support as well as the large financial commitments of extremist Arabs. After the fall of their regime and losing most of Afghanistan's territory, the Taliban decided to establish a war-economy based on the illegal production and trade of narcotics. In the remote areas of southern Afghanistan, where the Taliban has its strongest presence, they have provided security support for poppy cultivation. In many cases, they force farmers to grow poppies. According to sources, the Taliban receive \$70-\$100 million annually from the drug business. The Taliban's strongholds and areas of greatest narcotics production are mostly located in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan, mostly along the border with Pakistan.

Pakistan has continuously played a major role in the instability of Afghanistan, first by supporting different factions of the Mujahideen in their struggle for power, which destroyed the capital city of Kabul in the early 1990s, and then by continuing to support the Taliban by providing sanctuaries and political asylum to many Taliban leaders. Pakistan's support for the Taliban has been on top of the agenda whenever there are political and/or diplomatic discussions between Afghanistan and Pakistan and other international summits. Afghanistan and most of the Western world is trying to convince Pakistan to deny sanctuaries and support to the Taliban and other Al-Qaeda associates. The ANSF, partnered with ISAF, continues to target insurgents across Afghanistan. Unlike Colombia during the early years of its struggle with the FARC, since the beginning Afghanistan has been fighting the insurgency by targeting insurgents involved in terrorism and narcotics in conjunction with one another.

Based on the case study of the Colombian COIN model, it is apparent that with an insurgency relying on terrorism and narcotics with external support, it is important to target all three factors simultaneously. Colombia learned this lesson the hard way, but since 2002 it has been successful in degrading FARC's activities to an acceptable level. In Colombia, the effects were achieved through an increase of U.S. financial and specialized military support in the

framework of Plan Colombia; military reform; and Alvaro Uribe's policy, which at the end resulted in a joint effort to eliminate both terrorism and narcotics simultaneously, not sequentially. While a government can deal with terrorism and narcotics as an internal issue, the factor of external support remains another difficult corner of the COIN triangle.

In many cases, external support can be limited by using diplomacy and international politics. In other words, the instruments of soft power, which can be done by making the insurgents irrelevant by degrading their activities and limiting their freedom of movement, resulting in a contraction in their sphere of influence. External support in the case of Colombia and Afghanistan is based on a mutual interest of the parties involved. In the case of the Taliban, Pakistan supports their efforts because Pakistan believes that the Taliban can be used as a strategic instrument to influence Afghanistan internal politics and to limit India's relations with Afghanistan. Similarly, in the case of Colombia, Venezuela considers the FARC as a strategic ally against a perceived U.S threat.

The central government simultaneously disrupting terrorist and narcotics nodes decisively degrades insurgent resources and capabilities. This reduces the incentive for external support elements to risk their own resources in supporting a futile insurgency. Therefore, the actions of the central government to disrupt terrorist and narcotics nodes indirectly forms a deterrent for external support elements of the insurgency. The author therefore recommends simultaneous CN and CT for the following reasons:

- By focusing on either terrorism or narcotics in isolation from the other, terrorists are allowed to temporarily shift resources and focus on the one that is currently under the least pressure.
- Simultaneous CT and CN can degrade the insurgents' ability to maintain and secure their internal economic resources resulting in heavy reliance on external support.
- Heavy reliance on internal support will result in increased terrorist attacks by insurgents,

which can be avoided and countered through CT operations. By making the insurgents irrelevant, one can indirectly affect the external support since it would be unwise to support a futile insurgency.

- Targeting terrorism and narcotics nodes simultaneously can indirectly result in decreasing external support, which in the long run can bring the insurgent to the peace table.

A government dealing with an insurgency must follow the analogy used in the “carrot and stick” expression. The carrot is the offer of reconciliation and the peace process, whereby insurgents can reach a political settlement. The General Directorate of Police Special Units is the stick used to defeat insurgencies in Afghanistan. GDPSU’s roots go back to the inception of Commando Unit 333 in 2003, the establishment of Commando Unit 444 and the Critical Response Unit or the CRU. As GDPSU continues to punch decisive blows in the face of insurgencies in Afghanistan, it also suffers from many shortcomings.

There are a number of elite units all working independently under different security institutions in Afghanistan. The Commando Corps of the Afghan National Army (ANA) under the Ministry of Defense of Afghanistan, elite task force units under the jurisdiction of the National Directorate of Security of Afghanistan (NDS), and other partnered units with NATO. The greater the number of elite units, the more dispersed the support, resources, training, and funding provided by the international community, i.e., NATO and ISAF. It is for this reason that even today after almost a decade of the establishment of GDPSU’s very first units, the directorate continues to rely upon NATO air support, target development, and intelligence.

The author is not implying that there is no need for the Commando Corps of the ANA and the other elite units under NDS, but there should be a clear distinction as to who has the lead as the government’s instrument of hard power in the fight within the realm of COIN. In order to make this successful, there should be a clear division of labor between the security and intelligence institutions of Afghanistan, not only to avoid duplication of efforts, but also to make

a distinction between the supported and supporting units. Currently in Afghanistan, all of the aforementioned units are involved in COIN, but none of these units has a clear understanding of who has the lead and how, when, and where they can support the leading unit.

In Afghanistan, the NDS, which is the lead intelligence agency, has the most sophisticated and modern intelligence equipment and ability to target development assets in Afghanistan. The directorate is mainly responsible for clandestine operations, information gathering, and observing anti-constitutional activities on a large scale. Since NDS has the target development capability and the most reliable and advanced intelligence resources in the country, in many cases it has used its own organic tactical units for targeting terrorist networks. The ANA's Commandos Corps, one of the very well-equipped and trained units with organic airlift capabilities, was originally designed to conduct special operations mostly in areas under insurgent control, where the number of insurgents exceeds 200 members. The Commando Corps follows the footprints of NDS by conducting independent operations aimed to arrest individual members of the Taliban.

As an inherent responsibility, civil order, elimination of criminal networks, seizure and prevention of narcotics, and protection of citizens falls under the Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan. Therefore, the GDPSU should lead COIN in Afghanistan. The ANA and the NDS, as required, should assist the GDPSU to provide military and intelligence support, respectively. Such an approach would not only better define roles and responsibilities, but also allow the prioritization of current, limited resources and support from international forces.

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